

Press release

High Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean-Western Balkans route takes place on 8 October in Luxembourg

A High Level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean-Western Balkans route will take place in Luxembourg on 8 October with the aim of enhancing engagement among relevant partners in order to increase solidarity with those who are bearing the brunt of refugee flows from Syria and to ensure an orderly management of refugee and migration flows along this route. The conference will be held at ministerial level and will bring together the Ministers responsible for Foreign and for Home Affairs/Migration from the European Union with counterparts from the Western Balkan countries, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, non-EU Schengen Associated countries as well as representatives of relevant EU and UN agencies and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The meeting will be chaired by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs/Minister of Immigration and Asylum, on behalf of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU. Apart from HRVP Mogherini, the Commission will also be represented by three Commissioners: Johannes Hahn for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations; Dimitris Avramopoulos for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship; Christos Stylianides for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management.

Recent events - with the world facing an unprecedented refugee crisis and the reception capabilities of countries along the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkan route put under considerable strain - clearly demonstrate the need for a determined, coordinated and coherent regional response. The present situation affects, inter alia, security, public order and creates social tension in countries of transit and final destination. It has huge human costs. We are facing a common challenge and we need to respond collectively with solidarity and partnership.

The discussion at the conference will focus on: a) increasing support to countries of first asylum hosting most Syrian refugees, notably Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, in order to help them face the pressure; b) improving reception, registration and asylum processing capabilities in all affected transit countries to ensure protection is granted to those entitled to it and those who are not in need of international protection are returned; c) enhancing cooperation to fight organised crime responsible for migrant smuggling; d) addressing root causes of forced displacement, namely considering ways to strengthen support to a political solution to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq and fighting extremist terrorism in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; e) discussing engagement with countries of origin of other irregular migrants.

It is envisaged that the High Level Conference adopts a Declaration that will set out the main principles, goals and actions participants will jointly subscribe to, and will undertake, to ensure full protection for refugees, orderly management of borders and return of persons not entitled to

international protection. The conference is part of a process. Implementation of its commitments will require active follow-up.

Media programme:

- From 17h onwards: Arrivals with possibility of doorsteps, Council premises, Luxembourg
- 18h Plenary Session with tour-de-table for audio-visual media
- 19.30 Family Photo
- 19.40 Press conference by the two co-chairs
- 20h Working Dinner

For further details and accreditation, please follow:
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2015/10/08/>

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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